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### The Online Personal Trainer: A Guide To Getting Workout Advice via Email

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Author(s): Tara Parker-Pope

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#### Abstract (Document Summary)

To find an online trainer, ask at your local gym if trainers there offer e-coaching services. A Google search of "personal trainers" and "online" kicks up dozens of potential trainers. If you're looking for marathon or Ironman training or even coaching for tennis or weight lifting, a more detailed search will turn up several options.

Mr. [Jeff Galloway], the Olympic runner and author of several books on running, says users of his training program at [www.jeffgalloway.com](http://www.jeffgalloway.com) start by answering a questionnaire about their fitness level and exercise goals. After that, he gives them a customized training schedule, and they are assigned a day of the week to check in by email. The six-month program, which costs \$249, is most effective for those who check in regularly, says Mr. Galloway, because he is able to identify potential training and injury problems before they become serious. When coaching one client, a war veteran who was training for the Marine Corps Marathon, Mr. Galloway says he determined, via email, that the man was training too hard. He urged him to slow down and incorporate more "walk breaks" in his training.

Mr. [Bob Greene], the personal trainer of Ms. [Oprah Winfrey], hopes to begin offering personalized Internet training by January. Although Mr. Greene says he likely will take on some email clients, most users will sign up with one of several trainers overseen by Mr. Greene. For now, Mr. Greene offers prepackaged programs through his [getwiththeprogram.org](http://getwiththeprogram.org) and [totalbodymakeover.com](http://totalbodymakeover.com) sites. For about \$40, users can sign up for 12-week courses based on Mr. Greene's techniques. New users answer a questionnaire and are given one of several preset exercise plans, depending on their fitness level and goals.

#### Full Text (994 words)

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FOR SOME BUSY PEOPLE, the most effective piece of home exercise equipment may be the computer.

A slew of online personal trainers and fitness programs are making it easier to obtain expert advice without the hassle and expense of a personal training session. Once a niche market that largely involved prepackaged workout programs sold by gyms and fitness sites, online training is evolving into more personalized advice, with individualized training plans and regular feedback from some of the biggest names in the fitness world.

On the Web, regular folks can now gain access to elite trainers, such as Olympic runner Jeff Galloway, who hosts popular running clinics around the country but also offers personal coaching via email. Exercise guru Bob Greene, best known as Oprah Winfrey's personal trainer, has created self-contained online training classes and hopes to launch one-on-one email training early next year.

The biggest benefit of online training and e-coaching is the price. A typical session with a personal trainer can cost from \$50 to \$75 an hour, but many online training programs cost as little as \$5 to \$10 a week. E-training also eliminates the hassle of

scheduling an appointment with a trainer, many of whom are already booked during the most convenient training times.

Questions remain about whether the benefits of e-training can make up for the loss of face-to-face interaction with an exercise expert. Face-to-face exercise trainers not only monitor your form and progress, but they also force you to stay committed to an exercise program and prevent you from slacking off.

But a study this spring in the Journal of the American Medical Association has boosted hopes among the exercise community that online training can produce results. Researchers at Brown University studied dieters who used Internet weight-loss programs, comparing those who simply read information from Web sites with those who received weekly email advice from behavioral therapists. In the study, 45% of dieters who took part in structured programs with continual contact and email feedback lost at least 5% of their body weight, compared with 22% of those in the education-only group. Logging on more frequently was associated with better weight loss in both groups.

Online personal training involves one-on-one contact with a trainer -- just as you get at the gym -- except all conversations are by email. Exercisers check in with their trainers, update them on their progress and injury status and receive feedback via email. Less- personal options include music-filled workouts that can be downloaded to an MP3 player, and other prepackaged exercise plans.

To find an online trainer, ask at your local gym if trainers there offer e-coaching services. A Google search of "personal trainers" and "online" kicks up dozens of potential trainers. If you're looking for marathon or Ironman training or even coaching for tennis or weight lifting, a more detailed search will turn up several options.

Users of online training programs need to ask questions so they know whether they are getting personal feedback directly from the trainer or an assistant, or just a prepackaged workout. Users also need to check out the credentials of their trainer. Look for certification from the American College of Sports Medicine ([acsm.org](http://acsm.org)), the American Council on Exercise ([acefitness.org](http://acefitness.org)), or the National Strength and Conditioning Association ([nsca-lift.org](http://nsca-lift.org)).

Mr. Galloway, the Olympic runner and author of several books on running, says users of his training program at [www.jeffgalloway.com](http://www.jeffgalloway.com) start by answering a questionnaire about their fitness level and exercise goals. After that, he gives them a customized training schedule, and they are assigned a day of the week to check in by email. The six-month program, which costs \$249, is most effective for those who check in regularly, says Mr. Galloway, because he is able to identify potential training and injury problems before they become serious. When coaching one client, a war veteran who was training for the Marine Corps Marathon, Mr. Galloway says he determined, via email, that the man was training too hard. He urged him to slow down and incorporate more "walk breaks" in his training.

"Some people have a particular race goal, but others are just doing it for lifestyle reasons and need someone to pat them on the back," says Mr. Galloway. "That pretty instant response you can get on email is quite effective."

Mr. Greene, the personal trainer of Ms. Winfrey, hopes to begin offering personalized Internet training by January. Although Mr. Greene says he likely will take on some email clients, most users will sign up with one of several trainers overseen by Mr. Greene. For now, Mr. Greene offers prepackaged programs through his [getwiththeprogram.org](http://getwiththeprogram.org) and [totalbodymakeover.com](http://totalbodymakeover.com) sites. For about \$40, users can sign up for 12-week courses based on Mr. Greene's techniques. New users answer a questionnaire and are given one of several preset exercise plans, depending on their fitness level and goals.

Mr. Greene says that although face-to-face training may always be better for some clients, he believes others actually do better with online training or prepackaged online workouts because it gives them more flexibility in scheduling workouts, rather than trying to work around a trainer's schedule.

Mr. Greene notes that the most important issue is chemistry, and whether the trainer can relate to the challenges faced by the client, whether it's a busy executive schedule or the unpredictable schedule of a mother of three. "If they motivate you, then that's going to be good chemistry," he says.

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## Hi-Tech Workouts

Some online training and exercise programs:

PROGRAM: [Jeffgalloway.com](http://Jeffgalloway.com), \$249/6 months

DESCRIPTION: Personal email coaching from Olympic runner

PROGRAM: MarkAllenonline.com, \$90-\$150/6 weeks

DESCRIPTION: Triathlon training from Ironman champion

PROGRAM: Workoutsforyou.com, \$80-\$170/6 months

DESCRIPTION: Training options include fitness for brides-to-be

PROGRAM: Totalbodymakeover.com, \$39.95/12 weeks

DESCRIPTION: Prepackaged 12-week course from Oprah's personal trainer

PROGRAM: Teamintraining.org, No charge

DESCRIPTION: Coaching for participants in cancer-fundraising races

PROGRAM: Cardiocoach.com, \$15-\$20

DESCRIPTION: Coached workouts and music on CDs and MP3 downloads

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